



Updated : 8/12/2023

## Minor League Rule Book

The primary goal of the Minor League Program for 9 and 10 year olds is to reinforce the fundamentals and rules of the game which were taught during the Rookie Program. Additional concepts (stealing bases, bunting) which were not previously covered will also be introduced.

At this level the coaches will continue to focus on individual skill improvements and the basics of team strategies. While the main focus remains on skill development and the enjoyment of participation, players will compete and games will resemble as much as possible, the “true” game of baseball.

The game shall be played in accordance with the Official Baseball Rules, published by the National Baseball Congress except the rules modified herein.

### ***Uniforms***

Batting Helmets.....	2	Mound Visit Rules.....	6
Gloves / Bats.....	2	Pitching Restrictions.....	6

### ***Rules of Play Other***

Batting Line Up.....	2	Leaving the Game.....	7
Batting Warm Up Swings.....	2	Minimum # of Players Rule....	7
Bunting.....	3	Must Play Rule.....	7
Five Run Rule.....	3	Baseballs.....	7
Hit by the Pitch.....	4	Fair Play Rule.....	7
Length of Game.....	8	Slide Rules.....	4
Stealing.....	3		
Tournament.....	9	Courtesy Runner Rule.....	4
Umpires.....	9	Infield Fly Rule.....	4
Overthrow Rule.....	5	<b><i>Field Care</i></b>	
Third Strike Rule.....	5	Playing	
Field.....	10	Fielding.....	5
Field Responsibilities.....	10		

### **Batting Helmets**

Batting helmets with face protectors must be worn when batting or running the bases. No player will be allowed to bat with a helmet that does not have a face protector. Any player that removes his helmet while the ball is in play shall be called out. Batting helmets must also be worn while practicing. Chin straps must always be fastened.

### **Gloves/Bats**

In the Minor League, a field player may use any legal glove regardless of the position played. However, only the catcher may use a catcher's glove. Bats can be no larger than 2 5/8 in diameter. USA Bats only.

### **Batting Line Up**

The complete lineup will be batted with no exceptions. All players must be in the lineup at the start of the game and remain in the same order for the remainder of the game. Once the first pitch is thrown, the lineup is set.

If a player shows up after the lineup has been set the player entering the game will be placed in the next spot at the bottom of the order. (ex. if the initial lineup had 10 players the new player would be placed in the 11<sup>th</sup> position). If a team has gone through the complete lineup, the player is still placed in the next spot at the bottom of the lineup.

If a situation occurs where batters in your lineup, due to a low scoring game, only were able to bat 1 time, in the next game coaches should make every effort to move that player/s a few spots up in their order so that this does not occur 2 games in a row.

### **Batting: Warm-Up Swings**

Absolutely no warm-up swings allowed in the dugout. Players must wait until they approach the batter's box to take warm-up swings. On-deck hitter must remain in dugout.

### **Bunting**

Bunting is not permitted in the Minor League.

### **Five Run Rule**

No more than 5 runs will be scored in any inning except the final inning as described later in this booklet. Any additional runs that may score on the continuation of play will not count. For example, if a team has 4 runs already in, the bases are loaded, and the next batter hits a grand slam, only 1 run will count. When the 5<sup>th</sup> run scores the umpire shall declare timeout and the batting team will take the field. The final inning as outlines under "Length of Game", unlimited runs can be scored for each team.

## **Stealing**

Stealing is permitted; however, base runners may steal second and third base only. Base runners may not leave the base until the ball crosses home plate. At no time is a runner that advances to third base allowed to steal home. Base runners may only advance one base per steal attempt. For example, if a runner is attempting to steal second base and the ball is thrown into center field, the runner must remain on second and not advance to third.

Runners will only be allowed to steal one base per batter at the plate. No stealing if the batting team is leading the game by five or more runs at any point in an inning. Stealing may resume if the lead falls below five runs.

Limiting a base runner to one base per steal attempt, as well as disallowing the stealing of home, will encourage the catcher to make a throw on all steal attempts without fear of giving up additional bases. This will eliminate the “automatic” stealing of second when runners are on first and third. In addition, catchers will not refrain from throwing to third for fear of overthrowing the bag and possibly allowing the runner to score from second. At the minor level, allowing catchers to throw without fear of giving up additional runs will allow them to develop their skills for advanced levels of play.

A throw back to the pitcher after a pitched ball shall be considered a dead ball, and runners may not advance.

A runner is “frozen” at third base unless forced to advance by a walk, the batter puts the ball in play or the catcher tries to pick off the runner at third base. On a catcher’s attempted pick off at third base, if the ball is overthrown (not controlled by the third baseman) all runners can advance one base only as they would do on any steal attempt.

No stealing if the batting team is leading the game by five or more runs at any point in an inning. Stealing may resume if the lead falls below five runs.

## **Courtesy Runner Rule**

Each team will have the option of using a courtesy runner for ***the pitcher & catcher***. Courtesy runners will help speed up the game, especially with kids that need help with the equipment. Teams are encouraged to use this rule consistently to help ensure games move on a timely basis which helps to allow for less games that are shortened by time limit rules. The runner must be the last player to have made an out.

Please keep this rule in mind when catchers are batting by having a player have their helmet on and be ready. If a game is delayed looking for the runner, then the purpose of a courtesy runner is defeated.

### **Infield Fly Rule**

Will not apply in the Minor League.

### **Hit by the Pitch**

If the pitcher hits 2 batters in the same inning the pitcher must be removed from the game. If the player hit by the pitch needs a pinch runner the player making the last out will be used.

### **Slide Rules**

Players must slide on any close play. Headfirst slides are not allowed and will result in an out; however, dives back to the base are allowed. Defensive players must not block the base path without the ball. Please have the kids stay out of the base paths when they are not involved in a play.

### **Overthrow Rule**

Advancing on overthrows that are out of play at first and third base will be limited to one additional base for the runner. For example, with runners on first and second the infielder fields the ball and overthrows first base. If the ball goes out of play, the batter is entitled to second base, the runner starting on first is entitled to third base and the runner starting on second will score.

An overthrow that does not leave the field of play will be considered a live ball and the runners may advance one base after the overthrow at their own risk. Fielders should be encouraged to get the overthrow and try and make a play on the runner attempting another base. Runners are limited to one base, so if a second overthrow occurs within the same play, the runner will not be able to advance to another base. The umpire should call time out once the runner is called safe at the next base.

A play will end when timeout is called by the ump, or the ball is returned to the pitcher in the mound area. Runners may not advance unless they were already doing so. This will include throws to the pitcher, in the mound area, that the pitcher does not catch or goes past him/her. If the intent was to return the ball to the pitcher the play is dead, again, unless a runner was actively proceeding to another base.

### **Third Strike Rule**

Batter is out on third strike. The batter cannot attempt first base on a third strike whether or not the catcher catches the ball.

### **Fielding**

9 defensive players are permitted in the field with Hampstead versus Hampstead. Versus Finksburg 10 players are permitted in the field. Free substitution is allowed.

### **Mound Visit Rule**

On the second visit to the mound, in 1 inning for an individual pitcher, by the manager, coach or any combination of the same, the pitcher shall be removed. An injury timeout with a trip to the mound does not count toward this rule.

### **Pitching Restrictions**

A player shall not pitch more than 2 innings per game (innings must be consecutive), with a maximum of 6 innings per week. A pitching week begins on Saturday and ends on Friday. Each coach must keep a record of innings pitched per week. There are no fractional innings. If you pitch one pitch in an inning then that counts as pitching the whole inning. Once a pitcher is removed, they may not pitch again during that game.

Warm up between innings are limited to 5 warm up pitches.

No intentional walks which means teams cannot simply tell the umpire that the batter walks. Additionally, the catcher cannot stand and throw balls outside in a pitch out format. This does not include a pitch out for the intent of trying to throw out a runner trying to steal. (Rare)

Players who are playing down a league may not pitch.

### **Leaving the Game**

If a player is injured or gets sick during the course of the game the manager must decide, when the player's spot in the batting order occurs : whether the player is removed from the lineup or will stay in the lineup. If the player is removed from the lineup no out will be recorded and the player cannot reenter the game offensively or defensively. If the manager elects to keep the player in the game an out will be recorded if the player is unable to bat. As long as the player is not removed from the lineup, they may reenter the game at any point and resume their position in the batting order.

Players who arrive late will be added to the bottom of the lineup, unless the player arrives in time to bat in their original spot.

### **Minimum # of Players Rule**

A team must play the game with at least 8 players of their own team. If at any time the number of players falls below 8 the game will be considered a forfeit. Teams can still play if coaches agree, but the result is still a forfeit.

### **Must Play Rule**

Each defensive player will not sit no more than 2 innings per game. Coaches should do their best to try to rotate around who is sitting 2 innings per game. This only applies if due to the number of rostered players teams are needing to do this consistently. All players must sit out at least 1 defensive inning unless this is not necessary due to the number of players attending a game. All players must bat in the batting order. Free substitution is allowed at any point in the game (except pitcher, if that player has already pitched in the game).

## **Baseballs**

Each manager will provide the umpire with 1 game baseball per game. Please award a game ball, 1 per player, during each game and keeping mind that each player should receive 1 throughout the season.

## **Fair Play Rule**

Fair play will be the rule of the game. Good sportsmanship will be exhibited **at all times**. The umpire will have final say in any and all field circumstances. The game umpire will enforce good sportsmanship from coaches, players, and fans. The umpire has the right to ask any person not adhering to proper conduct, as determined by the umpire, to leave the field after first warning the coach of the offending team. The umpire shall also have the right to declare a forfeit if the situation so merits.

## **Length of Games**

Games will begin on time, meaning that the first pitch should be thrown at game time. Before that, teams need to warm up if they choose to, and both managers should be present for ground rules with the umpire. For those things to happen, enough time needs to be given to each team to use the infield if desired. The two managers and the umpire should coordinate times so that everyone is satisfied with warm-up time. Both managers should agree on the time of the first pitch in case a question arises later in the game about the two-hour time limit.

Daylight and weather permitting, games consist of six innings. Four innings must be completed to qualify as an official game, or 3½ if the home team is winning. If a game does not reach that point, it shall be suspended and continued later, from the time of the stoppage.

Mercy Rule- The game can end in the event a team is leading by 15 runs at any point after four innings (3½ if the home team is ahead). However, if a team is up by 15, the teams can continue playing if both managers agree, although the official score will be what it was when the team earned a 15-run lead.

All regular season games will be limited to two hours. No new inning after 2hrs. Umpire is to communicate the last inning. Any inning starting in the last 25 minutes of the time limit would be declared last inning. If innings have been running long (ie: many runs scored), the umpire could declare this prior to this time. If the last inning has been declared and played, but the 2-hour time limit has not been reached then a second unlimited inning will be played unless this was the 6<sup>th</sup> inning of the game. Exception to this would occur early in the season when darkness is a factor. Since some games will neither reach the 2-hour limit or 6 innings, coaches should agree on what should be the last inning based on darkness and relay this to the umpire. If the 6<sup>th</sup> inning is completed in a tie and the 2-hour time limit has not been reached, then the game will continue, but in no event shall any full inning start after the 2-hour time limit. Extra innings would be unlimited runs scored. If a winner is not declared in a game, then the game will be ruled a tie. An inning begins when the third out of the previous inning is made.

There should be no more than one minute between the third out and the first pitch of the next inning unless there are extenuating circumstances, determined by the umpire. Any game still in progress after 2½ hours will cease at that point, and the score will revert back to what it was at the start of that inning.

For darkness or thunder/lightning, the decision to resume will be made among the two managers and the umpire: if two of the three of them agree to resume the game, the game will be resumed. If the game is stopped, and enough innings have been played for an official game, then the game is over. If not, the game is suspended and continued later. For questionable field conditions before the game starts, the home team manager decides whether the game starts; after the first pitch, the umpire shall decide.

At the first sight of lightning or sound of thunder, all players will be removed from the field immediately until it is safe to return 30 minutes following the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. All players must seek shelter in a vehicle.

### **Tournament**

TBA

### **Umpires**

Coaches must treat the umpires with the utmost respect at all times. Baseball requires judgement calls and mistakes will be made. There is generally only 1 umpire and they can't see everything. Discuss all calls in a controlled manner and set a good example for the kids and the parents. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated.

### **Playing Field**

Base paths will be 60 feet

The rubber will be 46 feet from home plate. A mound is not required.

Ground rules will be determined by the umpire and reviewed with each manager prior to the game. Field circumstances may dictate the ground rules (e.g. hole in a fence). If a situation occurs which is not covered by the ground rules, the decision will be at the umpire's discretion.

### **Field Responsibilities**

Home team prepares the field prior to the game. Visiting team cleans up after the game. Clean up includes raking the field, plugging bases, and locking up equipment.

1. Governing rules with these exceptions	Official Baseball Rules
2. Base length	60'
3. Pitching length	46'
4. Game length	6 innings
5. Pitcher innings (per game)	2 innings
6. Pitcher innings (per week)	6 innings
7. Balks	No penalty
8. Dropped 3 <sup>rd</sup> strike	NO
9. Infield fly	NO
10. Lead offs	NO
11. Maximum bat size	2 5/8" diameter
12. Metal spikes	NO
13. 5 run rule (except final inning)	YES
14. Bunting	NO
15. Head first slides	NO
16. Runners must slide to avoid contact	YES
17. Courtesy runner for the Pitcher/Catcher	YES
18. Umpires required	YES